CIA's Cord Meyer

CIA'S Cord Meyer

Going to London

Post 3/24/73

Manchester Guardian

The Central Intelligence Agency's new station chief in London is Cord Meyer, hitherto the agency's assistant deputy director of plans in Washington.

The planning department of the CIA is responsible for espionage and clandestine operations. Detractors of the CIA call it the "Department of Dirty Tricks."

Meyer was in line for promotion to be deputy director of plans—"DDP," the nearest CIA equivalent of James Bond's "M."

Instead, according to CIA watchers here, he is being promoted to the U.S. embassy in London. They regard this as a "kick upstairs."

In 1967, it was revealed that Meyer was in charge of covertly funding Encounter magazine and other organizations. Last summer, he became the object of further notoriety when he asked the New York publisher Harper and Row to show the CIA proofs of a book since published, called "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia." The book linked the CIA with the drug traffic in that area.

Meyer later denied that it had been his intention to suppress the book.

Few details are known about the nature or extent of CIA operations in England. Sources here say that there is a large base for covert action in premises within a few minutes walk from the U.S. embassy in Grosvenor Square. This is the headquarters for covert action in western and eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. It was moved from Paris to London at the time of Gen. Charles De Gaulle's quarrel with NATO and the United States.

The CIA works closely with British intelligence and claims not to engage in clandestine activities in Britain.

Meyer's career is a fascinating story. He was one of the most brilliant men of his year at Yale University in the early 1940's. He lost an eye in a Marine landing in the Pacific war and wrote a short story about the experience called "Waves of Darkness." After the war, he became a passionate advocate of world government and wrote a book on this subject. He was a hero to the student generation of the late 1940's.

He joined the CIA in 1953 at the urging of Alan Dulles. At that time, the Agency was a respectable haven for liberal intellectuals. During the McCarthy era he was investigated for alleged Communist associations but was cleared. In Fact, he had never been a Communist sympathizer. He soon became as ardent for the Cold War as he had been for the United World Federalist movement.

Meyer's assignment to London is seen by CIA watchers as a part of the purge which the agency is experiencing under its new director, James Schlesinger. Reports in Washington this week say that the CIA's 18,000 personnel is to be cut by 10 percent by June 30. Schlesinger, a businessman with no intelligence background, is said to be making a through-going reappraisal of the CIA's functions and operations.